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	ISN-00	OMB-00	NIMA-00	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	P-00
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FOR POL/MIL AFFAIRS A/S SHAPIRO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/28/2019
 TAGS: [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [MOPS](#) [SA](#)
 SUBJECT: NEW F-15S: A/S SHAPIRO'S DISCUSSION WITH THE
 COMMANDER OF THE ROYAL SAUDI AIR FORCE

Classified By: Ambassador James B. Smith for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

¶1. (U) Summary: Assistant Secretary for Political-Military Affairs Andrew Shapiro met on October 24 with LtG Abdulrahman Al-Faisal, Commander of the RSAF. LtG Al-Faisal described the RSAF leadership's reservations about the proposed purchase of new F-15s. End Summary.

New F-15s "We want them, however..."

¶2. (C) LtG Al-Faisal told A/S Shapiro that most RSAF officers prefer U.S. equipment and most of their pilots had trained in the U.S. The RSAF has endeavored to equip itself with the best weapons available through the U.S., but unfortunately, that experience has been unsatisfactory. LtG Al-Faisal mentioned specifically the Peace Sun 9 program under which Saudi Arabia acquired its first F-15s, pointing out that the RSAF received only 48 lantern pods for the 72 aircraft. He noted that "Britain, France, and others are giving us everything we want." He emphasized they loved the F-15s, but without the best weapons and full capability, it's not much help.,

¶3. (S) Saudi Arabia, LtG Al-Faisal commented, now needs an aircraft to counter its new main threat, which is from Iran. Yemen is also a growing challenge, which is why the RSAF is seeking small diameter bombs. He also mentioned the SLAM-ER missile, noting that the U.S. has provided these to Korea. Saudi Arabia, he said, will be acquiring the Storm Shadow from the UK, a missile with a longer range and greater lethality than the SLAM-ER - making it hard for the RSAF to understand the U.S. logic in withholding the SLAM-ER.

¶4. (C) Saudi Arabia has learned from its experience, Al-Faisal said, and while our preference for U.S. equipment still exists, we now recognize that it is "no good getting a gun without bullets." The RSAF now recognizes that the approach of the Peace Sun 9 program was wrong - which was to purchase the airplane with an agreement to discuss specific systems subsequently. "Now we need to agree to the full package in advance."

¶5. (C) A/S Shapiro pointed out that the SLAM-ER missile had not been released to any country in the Middle East.

However, he offered assurance that the U.S. is committed to helping Saudi Arabia develop its defenses against the Iranian threat and is equally committed to providing the RSAF with the most capable aircraft possible. He specifically noted that the proposed configuration represented the most capable plane the Saudis will have ever had. A/S Shapiro emphasized that the systems listed in Secretary Gates' Oct 7 letter did not include all the systems in the proposed configuration. A/S Shapiro also noted that the U.S. interagency may be interested in sending a team back to Riyadh to review the full proposed configuration in detail. Finally, A/S Shapiro explained that it was important to him that the U.S. be able to deliver on any package that it promised and this was one major reason why we were being deliberate in assessing the Saudis, desire for additional systems.

¶6. (C) As part of the procurement package, LtG Al-Faisal said that the RSAF wants to acquire a reconnaissance capability and electronic warfare training. He said that "We are using this deal -- if it happens -- to upgrade our training facilities." We would also hope to base some of the new F-15s in the U.S. This would help Saudi Arabia increase the number of Saudis we can send to the U.S., and would help further develop our relations.

SMITH